

**Virginia Invasive Species Council
December 17, 2003
Virginia Housing Development Authority**

DRAFT MINUTES

Virginia Invasive Species Council Members Present

W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., Chair
Leon E. App for Joseph H. Maroon
Frank M. Fulgham for J. Carlton Courter, III
John Scrivani for James W. Garner, Jr.
Charlie Sled for William L. Woodfin
Robert O'Reilly for William A. Pruitt
Robert B. Stroube
Jake Porter for Phillip Shuchet
L. Donelson Wright

Staff Present

David K. Paylor, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources

Thomas L. Smith, DCR
J. Christopher Ludwig, DCR

Richard K. Myers, DCR
Michael R. Fletcher, DCR

Others Present

Steve Nash, University of Richmond
Jennifer Allen, The Nature Conservancy
Nikki Rovner, The Nature Conservancy
Brian Watson, VDGIF
David Whitehurst, VDGIF
Ray Fernald, VDGIF
Roger Mann, VIMS
Rachel Clare Muir, U.S. Geological Survey

Call to Order

Secretary Murphy called the first meeting of the Virginia Invasive Species Council to order and asked members to introduce themselves.

Purpose of the Council

Secretary Murphy reviewed the purposes of the Council.

He noted that this summer the U.S. Government Accounting office reported that “invasive species – harmful, nonnative plants, animals, and microorganisms – are found throughout the United States and cause damage to crops, rangelands, waterways, and other ecosystems that is estimated to cost in the billions of dollars annually.” Second only to habitat destruction, invasive species pose the greatest threat to Virginia and the nations native ecosystems. The threat comes from both terrestrial and aquatic plants that take over and eliminate native plants from both their habitats, such as garlic mustard eliminating Virginia bluebells from bottomland forests, to Phragmites displaying native plants and animals in wetland systems. Invasive animals such as the zebra mussel threaten native freshwater systems as well as clogging and fouling water intake structures.

The Virginia Invasive Species Council has been formed to provide state leadership regarding invasive species. Secretary Murphy expressed his hope that the Council will provide a common voice on invasive species for Virginia, and a forum by which agencies can work together to educate the public and each other to find constructive approaches to address these issues. The Secretary stated that the Council will represent a significant step forward, and will serve as a mechanism to bring serious resources to bear on invasive species before Virginia’s wetlands, forests and other natural habitats are forever altered.

The threat is significant, the charge is real. Secretary Murphy noted his concern that this act places significant unfunded demands upon the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Commonwealth.

Charge to the Council

Secretary Murphy reviewed the charge to the Council. Specific responsibilities of the Council are found in the *Code of Virginia* §10.1-2602 thru §10.1-2609 and include the following:

- The Council must meet quarterly.
- Ensure that each state agency’s activities concerning invasive species are coordinated, complementary, cost-efficient and effective;
- Encourage planning and action at local, state, regional and ecosystem-based levels to achieve the goals and objectives of the management plan;
- Develop guidance to state agencies on the prevention and control of invasive species, including the procurement, use and maintenance of native species to replace invasive species.
- Facilitate establishment of an information-sharing system to provide exchange of information concerning invasive species.
- Establish an advisory committee of stakeholders to provide information and advice for consideration by the Council.
- Develop a management plan by December 31, 2004 or when funding allows.
- Update the management plan every three years.

- Identify the personnel, other resources and additional levels of coordination needed to achieve the plan's identified goals and objectives.
- Request appropriations for staff as needed.
- The Chairman shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Council.

Background on Invasive Species

Steve Nash, Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Richmond gave a presentation on the background of Invasive Species. A copy of Mr. Nash's full presentation is available from the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Mr. Nash noted the following:

- We are killing a good bit of our natural landscape with invasive species, but it is happening over time. So while we have been looking at it, we haven't quite seen it for what it is. The formation of this Council takes a long stride toward seeing the problem for what it really is.
- One hundred years ago, arborist W.A. Merkle discovered a strange orange fungus, which we now call *Cryphonectria parasitica*, growing on some American chestnut trees. Forty years later that blight fungus had erased all mature chestnut trees – about a quarter of the trees of the Appalachian forest – from Alabama to Canada.
- The hemlock woolly adelgid was discovered on Japanese hemlocks in Maymont Park in Richmond, Virginia. By the 1980s they had spread to the Blue Ridge. By this past summer they had spread to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park and as far north as Connecticut.
- The U.S. Forest Service believes that butternut trees, also known as white walnut, may become extinct during the next half-century because of an imported disease.
- Since dogwood anthracnose fungus was discovered in Maryland in the late '80s, it has killed off more than half of Virginia's native dogwoods, especially those at high elevations. The native Virginia dogwoods originally numbered in the tens of millions.

Mr. Nash made the following recommendations.

- We need more public education.
- We need a system of statewide surveillance.
- We need to change both state and federal law so that private interests – shippers, traders, the pet industry, the nursery industry – can't introduce these hugely expensive kinds of biological pollution.
- Most of all we need committed leadership.

Overview of Current State Activities and Authorities

Tom Smith, Director of the Division of Natural Heritage for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) gave an overview of current state activities and authorities. A copy of Mr. Smith's full presentation is available from DCR.

Mr. Smith reviewed state agency responsibilities as outlined in the *Code of Virginia*.

Federal Invasive Species Activities and Authorities

Rachel Claire Muir from the U.S. Geological Survey gave an overview of Federal Invasive Species activities and authorities.

Ms. Muir noted that invasive species are not just a local problem, but are an international problem. She said that in 1999 an Executive Order created the National Invasive Species Council.

Ms. Muir said that invasive species have an annual impact of \$100 billion on the national economy.

She noted that under the current Administration the Invasive Species Council is under review. She also said that there is currently legislation in both the House and the Senate. The USDA has a particularly strong role in prevention.

Ms. Muir noted that early detection of an invasive species is critical. She said that programs like Natural Heritage Programs, with their expertise in natural history and information management, are the best opportunity to have expertise on the ground.

Zebra Mussels in Virginia

Ray Fernald of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries gave a presentation regarding Zebra Mussels in Virginia. A copy of Mr. Fernald's full presentation is available from DCR.

In late September 2000, the presence of zebra mussels was confirmed in Millbrook Quarry. An ad hoc group has been established to help eradicate the problem. Member agencies of the workgroup are:

- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia Tech, Occoquan Watershed Monitoring Lab
- Virginia Tech Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
- Fairfax County Water Authority
- City of Manassas Water Authority
- Prince William County Public Works Department
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Since their first meeting in October 2002 the ad hoc workgroup has:

- Reviewed the Millbrook Quarry situation (10/02)
- Discussed potential eradication/control options (10/02)
- Outlined data needs and subsequent field work. (10/02)
- Reviewed 7 potential eradication options. (11/02)
- Discussed property access.(11/02)

Additional action taken regarding the Millbrook Quarry situation was:

- Legislation was introduced by Delegates Plum and Scott. This legislation, signed on March 16, 2003 gives DGIF the authority to conduct operations and measures to suppress, control, eradicate, prevent or retard the spread of any ANS.
- Legislation introduced by Delegate Dillard and signed on March 16, 2003 created the Virginia Invasive Species Council.

Access to the Millbrook Quarry was granted on March 14, 2003. Field work was completed on April 21-23.

No final decision has been made regarding the best alternative. Funding sources are being explored.

Phragmites, Where Are We Today

Dr. Rick Myers of the Department of Conservation and Recreation gave a presentation regarding Phragmites. A copy of Dr. Myers' presentation is available from DCR.

Dr. Myers noted that *Phragmites australis* is rhizomatous coarse perennial wetland grass growing to 4 meters tall, with broad leaf blades and a feathery purplish inflorescence, turning brown after seed production.

Paleoecological studies show that *Phragmites* has been a component of mid-Atlantic and Northeastern U.S. plant communities for thousands of years.

The explosive spread of *Phragmites* after 1950 is likely a result of the combination of the introduction of a non-native strain and nutrient enrichment, sedimentation and development in coastal zones.

Dr. Myers noted that eradication is not a realistic objective. Partial control is more feasible.

Council Discussion

Secretary Murphy noted that one of the statewide purposes is for the Council to establish an advisory committee. He asked that members consider names of individuals that

should be appointed to the advisory committee and requested that those names be forwarded to his attention.

Public Comment

Ms. Jennifer Allen expressed the support of The Nature Conservancy for the work of the Council.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr.
Chairman

Joseph H. Maroon
Recording Secretary